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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 49 DECEMBER 19, 2005

INSIDE

'Our History is Still Being Written'

Story of 3 Chinese-Cuban generals in Cuban Revolution

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New elections called in Canada after gov't loses confidence vote

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—The Liberal government of Canada led by Prime Minister Paul Martin fell November 28 when the parliament passed a no-confidence motion by a 171–133 vote. Martin immediately called an election for January 23.

The Liberals formed a minority government 17 months ago with 135 seats in the 306-seat House of Commons.

New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton indicated November 9 that the party would no longer support the Liberals, saying Martin would not commit to curbing the privatization of Medicare, the government-funded health-care system that continues to be eroded.

The NDP is a labor party formed in 1961 with affiliation from the trade unions.

Canada's ruling billionaire families and their political representatives face deepening problems in stabilizing their rule, to a large degree because of growing competition from other imperialist powers—especially Washington.

Recent polls show support for sovereignty in Quebec remains near 50 percent, as high as it has ever been. One of the two main parties that have

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Communist League in Canada launches election campaign

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Washington expands 'post-conflict' operations of U.S. military

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—A new Pentagon directive, issued November 28, outlines steps the U.S. military plans to take to be better prepared for post-invasion "stability operations" in future imperialist wars and occupations of other countries. The order extends the range of civil operations the U.S. armed forces will carry out following the end of an initial military assault. It is part of moves made by the U.S. rulers to transform their military into a more effective weapon in the drive to defend their interests, waged under the banner of the "war against terrorism."

Two days later, a speech by U.S. president George Bush outlining a "strategy for victory in Iraq" received high praise from liberal critics of the administration's conduct of the war. That response underscored the reality that, while the factional tone of Democratic and Republican politicians continues to sharpen, there is growing

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As we go to press...

Sami Al-Arian, a Palestinian who taught at the University of South Florida in Tampa, and three other defendants were acquitted December 6 of "terrorism" charges brought by Washington. More on this victory next week.

Janitors in Houston win battle for union

SEIU

Flora Aguilar (at podium) announces in Houston November 30 that 4,700 janitors there won representation with the Service Employees International Union. To the left are co-workers María Luisa Berlanga, Ercilia Sandoval, and Flor Camacho.

BY STEVE WARSHELL

HOUSTON—In a victory for the entire labor movement, 4,700 janitors working for four of the largest cleaning companies here have won representation with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). The unionized janitors represent about 60 percent of cleaners in the city's largest office buildings. The New York–based American Arbitration Association certified November 29 that the SEIU had obtained the signatures of a majority

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December 17 picket by Utah miners will mark one year since union vote

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

PRICE, Utah—Miners fighting to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) have called a picket line outside the Co-Op mine near Huntington for 1:00 p.m. December 17. That's the first anniversary of the vote for union recognition at the mine.

"December 17 is a special day for those of us who voted for the UMWA," said Co-Op miner José Contreras. "We want many people to join us on the 17th."

Ed Mayne, president of the state AFL-CIO; UMWA District 22; and Utah Jobs with Justice are sponsoring the action as part of activities the AFL-CIO is organizing nationally around International Human Rights Day—marked on December 10.

Mayne said the Utah AFL-CIO is also organizing a press conference to

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Ruling coalition sweeps Venezuelan elections

Voters line up at polls in Caracas December 4 in elections to Venezuela's National Assembly. The election was a landslide victory for the government headed by President Hugo Chávez, whose Fifth Republic Movement announced it had won 114 of the 167 seats. Allied parties gained the remaining seats, giving the governing coalition full control over the legislature.

Faced with the prospect of a resounding defeat, the U.S.-backed opposition—including the two parties that ruled the country for four decades prior to Chávez winning the presidency in 1998—chose to boycott the election. The turnout was low at 25 percent of registered voters, due partly to torrential rains and the boycott, government officials said; it was lowest in wealthy neighborhoods. Opposition leaders claimed the elections were illegitimate. Chávez replied, "These old parties, they are already dead."

Truckers at Los Angeles port fight lower pay and longer hours

BY FRANK FORRESTAL AND SETH DELLINGER

LONG BEACH, California—To much fanfare, the Marine Terminal bosses implemented the "Offpeak" program last summer to increase capacity and reduce congestion in the largest seaport complex in the United States by running operations 24 hours a day. Under the program, shippers are assessed a fee on cargo transported during peak business hours, an incentive to ship cargo at night and on weekends.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Teamsters have opposed Offpeak. This past summer the Teamsters organized a public protest against the plan, calling it "yet another attack on

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Court sets January 25 hearing on motions to dismiss Utah mine bosses' lawsuit 5

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Midwest event discusses fight against imperialism in Africa and worldwide

BY ILONA GERSH AND MARIA MOREANO

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—More than 100 people took part in a gathering on December 3 and 4 to hear and discuss reports from participants in the First Equatorial Guinea Book Fair. It was the third of four such meetings held in the United States with the theme "We Start with the World and How to Transform It." Similar events are taking place in London, Edinburgh, and Stockholm.

Participants came from throughout the Midwest. Among them were three meat packers who came up from Austin, Minnesota, a dairy farmer from Wisconsin, and young socialists from Detroit, Chicago, and the Twin Cities. They included several workers and youth who hail from Sudan, Zimbabwe, Congo, Cameroon, or Liberia.

Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, who headed a five-person team at the book fair, explained, "When we returned I was asked, 'Why did you go to Equatorial Guinea?' We went there for the same reason we go to New Orleans, to Brooks, Alberta. For the same reason we walk the picket lines at Northwest Airlines." In contrast with the imperialist-promoted image of Africans as downtrodden people, she said, "we saw not helpless victims but toiling, fighting humanity facing imperialism—with all the contradictions—and fighting to transform their future."

Waters described the rapid changes unfolding under the impact of imperialist investment in the extraction of oil in Equatorial Guinea, a country that because of centuries of imperialist-imposed underdevelopment still lacks commercial agriculture and, until recently, even small-scale industry. These changes include the emergence of a Guinean working class, the breakdown of the legacy of isolation enforced by Spanish colonialism, and a new generation hungry for an understanding of politics in their country and the world.

During the discussion period, Rodemar Hernández, who identified himself as an Afro-Cuban, asked about how to address the lack of knowledge many Africans have of their own genuine leaders. Arrin Hawkins, one of the panelists, replied that many students and teachers at the book fair were searching for more books by Guinean authors about their own history and culture. They were also attracted to Pathfinder's books of speeches by revolutionary leaders such as Thomas Sankara and Nelson Mandela, about whom many youth knew little.

Yeamah Brewer, a Liberian-born college student, asked how a nation like Liberia, having just emerged from years of civil war, could advance. She said the newly elected president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was discussing various proposals for foreign investment. Waters explained that foreign investment will always be used by the imperialist powers, not for genuine development, but to reinforce their oppression of semicolonial countries.

Martín Koppel, a third panelist, added that bourgeois commentators blame the peoples of Africa for the wars, disease, and other social catastrophes they face. They argue that the U.S. government is their only hope. But it is imperialism that perpetuates these problems, such as the current civil conflict in Ivory Coast.

Militant/Carlos Samaniego

From left, Mary-Alice Waters and Martín Koppel, who spoke at December 3 meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota, join others at brunch the next day to continue the discussions.

Waters described the important role of women in the book fair. She pointed to the contradictions between the second-class status of women—who in much of Africa carry out most of the work, including agricultural labor—to the growing confidence of young women such as those who sought out pamphlets by Sankara including *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*.

Speaking to other meeting participants after the program, Abraham Gnreec, a Sudanese-born meat packer from the Des Moines, Iowa, area explained that Waters's description of the continuing practice of the bride price in Equatorial Guinea is a common condition of women in Sudan as well.

He added, "I've attended two forums recently. This one, on Equatorial Guineans who are taking the future into their hands. And one in Des Moines on the fight in Brooks, Alberta, by meat packers, who are doing the same thing." He said he knew some of the Sudanese-born unionists who were involved in the recent union-organizing victory in Canada.

On Sunday morning, 55 people, including some who had missed the previous night's meeting, returned for several more hours of discussion over brunch at a local Mexican restaurant.

Participants in the events contributed $960 to help defray the costs of sending the team to the book fair and of the public meetings.

Australian gov't 'transforms' military

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—"Revamp to create fast, lethal army" was the lead headline of the November 29 *Australian*. The article described preparations by the capitalist rulers here for the biggest transformation of their armed forces since World War II. This 10-year plan aims "to cope with the more dangerous global environment," the paper stated.

The army is to be restructured into nine "battle groups" capable of rapid deployment overseas. Each unit of 750 troops would be "self-sufficient" with its own artillery, tanks, and helicopters. They would be "more lethal and nimble, better protected and more adaptable" than the existing five main infantry battalions, the *Australian* said.

Combat troops would be increased by 2,500, nearly 10 percent, by 2012, in addition to drawing on more reservists. Two composite brigade-sized units of 3,000 would be created, each with their own aviation, artillery, armored vehicles, and engineering support.

The Australian government intends to be able to put a brigade and battle group into separate wars or interventions overseas at the same time.

The navy plans to add two heavy warships that could support amphibious assaults. They would transport up to 1,000 troops and be command centers for such deployments.

The restructuring would give the government flexibility in its own military operations and capacity to be part of the larger fighting formations of its closest allies, Washington and London.

THE MILITANT

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Communist League in Canada fields candidates

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—The Communist League in Canada is presenting a working-class alternative to the capitalist parties in the January 23 federal election.

The CL has named three candidates in Toronto-area ridings (electoral districts): Beverly Bernardo, a garment worker, in Parkdale-High Park; Michel Prairie, a meat packer, in Toronto Centre; and John Steele, a retired meat packer, in Eglinton-Lawrence.

Steele recently participated in the picket lines at the 23-day strike of workers at Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta.

"Workers at Lakeside Packers in Alberta recently won union recognition and their first contract after a three-week strike," says the CL campaign platform. "This summer truckers at the Port of Vancouver won better rates by refusing to move containers for several weeks. Quebec public sector workers are waging a fight for better wages, conditions, and improved services. They have held dozens of rallies and walkouts involving thousands of workers over the last several months."

Building labor solidarity with 250,000 Quebec public sector workers is at the center of the CL campaign, Bernardo said.

Organize, mobilize union power

"All these fights and many others are examples of the growing resistance by working people today," says the CL platform. Support for workers' struggles to organize trade unions and to use and extend union power to defend themselves and other working people from the bosses' assaults is the starting point of the Communist League election campaign platform.

The Communist League also calls on working people across Canada to support Quebec independence as part of forging a fighting movement of working people and their allies to take power out of the hands of the ruling billionaire class, establish a workers and farmers government, and join the worldwide struggle for socialism, Prairie said.

Opposition to imperialist wars abroad and threats against Iran, Syria, and north Korea are central to the CL platform.

The CL platform calls for "the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Canadian, U.S., and other imperialist armed forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. End Ottawa's complicity with Washington's cold war against Cuba! Hands off Venezuela! Eliminate all tariffs imposed on products coming into Canada. Cancel the Third World debt. Expose the drive by Washington, Ottawa, and their allies to prevent the nations oppressed by imperialism from developing nuclear power and other sources of energy needed to bring much of humanity out of darkness."

A new political situation

"We think a new political situation has opened in Canada," Prairie told the *Militant*.

"The capitalist rulers' confidence in their capacity to deal with support for Quebec independence is declining at the same time as they face stiff competition from Washington and other imperialist trading partners, and more intense labor resistance to attacks on wages, job conditions, and social programs working people have won in struggle, like public health care. The Lakeside victory and the widespread public support British Columbia teachers received when they defied an antistrike law for two weeks are examples of this resistance."

"The resistance today by working people to these assaults points to the road forward: to rely on our collective power and solidarity and organize independently of the capitalists and their parties to advance the common interests of workers and farmers worldwide," says the CL platform.

In ridings across Canada where it is not running candidates, the Communist League calls for a vote for the New Democratic Party—Canada's labor party to which most trade unions are formally affiliated.

"In British Columbia, working people and their unions fought antilabor laws, hospital closings, and education cuts in several battles," Prairie said.

"In last May's provincial election, the British Columbia NDP doubled its vote. Working people waging militant battles against the employers' offensive are pushing for their struggles to have a reflection on the political level, in the elections. They are putting it to the NDP, pushing it to defend the interests of the working class and its allies.

"That's why where the CL is not running we call for a vote for the NDP—even though we oppose its pro-capitalist program—and we are urging working people across the country to campaign with us for the uncompromising working-class platform the Communist League stands and fights for."

Militant photos by Natalie Doucet

Top: John Steele (left), Communist League candidate in Eglinton-Lawrence, at picket shack of meat packers on strike against Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta, in October. Below: Beverly Bernardo (left), CL candidate in Parkdale-High Park; and Michel Prairie, CL candidate in Toronto-Centre, speak at December 4 forum in Toronto where league announced its ticket in federal elections in three Toronto ridings (electoral districts).

New federal elections in Canada

Continued from front page

alternated in the government, the Conservative Party, no longer has any base in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois, a bourgeois nationalist party that supports sovereignty for Quebec, controls 54 federal seats there to 21 held by the Liberals.

Speaking before the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) national council December 2, Martin described the election as a referendum. "The Quebeckers [sic] have a choice between a party devoted to the destruction of Canada and us," he said.

Canadian capitalists have for many years had less success than their U.S. counterparts in driving down workers' wages and working conditions. Resistance among working people to the employers' antilabor offensive has been growing in recent months. There have been strikes and mobilizations by meat packers, teachers, truckers, and Quebec's public sector workers, among others.

Reflecting the lack of self-confidence among Canada's rulers, the beginning of the election campaign has been marked by a coarsening of bourgeois politics. Conservative leader Stephen Harper accused the Liberals of representing "organized crime," a reference to an ongoing corruption scandal involving prominent Liberals in Quebec. The Liberals replied by threatening legal action.

Most unions have indicated they will campaign for the NDP. Canadian Labour Congress president Ken Georgetti, speaking before the British Columbia Federation of Labour convention, called on union members to reelect incumbent New Democrats and help the party make gains in ridings (electoral districts) where they were close last time.

Canadian Auto Workers leader Basil "Buzz" Hargrove endorsed the Liberals at the CAW council meeting where Martin was invited. "This minority government deserves to go back to Ottawa, with even bigger numbers," he said. He called for support to the NDP in ridings where the NDP has the best chance to win.

Cyprus potato farmers demand pay to cover costs

BY MARIA PLESSA AND NATASHA TERLEXIS

LARNACA, Cyprus, November 27—In the area of Rizoelia on the Larnaca-Ayia Napa road we met today five potato farmers guarding dozens of tractors parked by the side of the road. Part of a delegation from the potato region of Kokkinohoria, they have been taking shifts here for 18 days, protesting the economic conditions they face.

According to the president of the farmers' association, Nicos Vasilas, most of the 1,500 families involved who produce potatoes in Cyprus are unable to pay their operating loans. These farmers plant between 30 and 50 hectares (1 hectare = 2.47 acres) and generally employ four to five workers, mostly immigrants, every season to prepare seed potatoes, plant, and harvest.

Potatoes have traditionally been the main export crop of this island nation. Prior to Cyprus joining the European Union (EU) the harvest was collected and marketed by a government board.

The farmers said they have been paid little, or nothing in some cases, for last year's crop. Vasilas said they have received no EU subsidies either. "We want financial assistance from the government to pay our debts, and assistance for those who want to stop farming, so this can be done with dignity and without debts to the banks."

Cypriot potato farmers have staged similar protests each of the past three years. Despite getting some help each time, their indebtedness is ballooning. "Things are more difficult since Cyprus joined the EU last year," Vasilas said.

—*MILITANT LABOR FORUMS*—

ALABAMA

Birmingham

In the Aftermath of Katrina: Gulf Coast Working People Demand Justice/Reportback from New Orleans March and Rally. Speaker: Karl Butts, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Dec. 17; Dinner 6:30 p.m.; program 7:30 p.m. *3029A Bessemer Rd. Tel: (205) 780-0021.*

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Democrats, Republicans Outdo Each Other in Backing Iraq War; Factionalism Rife Among Capitalist Politicians. Speaker: Frank Forrestal. Sat., Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m. *4229 S. Central Ave. Tel: (323) 233-9372*

San Francisco

Africa and the Cuban Revolution. Fri., Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m. *415 Mission St. Tel: (415) 584-2135*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

After Elections, Venezuela Confronts U.S. Imperialism's Hostility. Speakers: Representative, Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle; Tom Baumann and Luis Madrid, recently took part in Caracas book fair. Fri. Dec. 16. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. Donation $10 ($5 program only). *307 W. 36th St. 10 fl.(north elevators) Tel: (212) 629-6649.*

Louisiana farmers, devastated by storms, confront gov't indifference

BY KARL BUTTS

PLAQUEMINE PARISH, Louisiana—Between 75 percent and 80 percent of the citrus industry here, located south of New Orleans, was completely wiped out by hurricanes Katrina and Rita, affecting some 160 producers. In the worst-hit areas farmers lost virtually everything, including homes, barns, packing sheds, tractors, sprayers, and other farm implements and vehicles.

The 750-acre citrus industry here is dominated by small part-time farmers each growing between 100 and 1,500 trees. Farmers said that excluding labor, it costs $1,500 an acre to replant and about four years before the first harvest. Louisiana State University farm extension agent Alan Vaughn gave *Militant* reporters a tour of the region November 29.

Patty Vogt, 51, produces cattle and citrus on 120 acres with her brother. They are fourth-generation farmers in Nairn, among the hardest hit areas. Vogt was only able to rescue 54 of her original 300 cattle herd, which faced 20 foot high flood waters. The parish lost a total of 7,000 of its 10,000 cattle.

Vogt told the *Militant* that she had to threaten action against a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) official if he didn't give her a pallet of donated hay out of a truckload that he initially insisted was already spoken for. The flood waters killed all the grass in the pastures leaving the cows with nothing to eat.

After asking and receiving no help from the local government to clear a path on the top of the levee where her surviving herd was stranded, Vogt said she rented a track-hoe for $1,600 and with two hired hands cleared a path to where the cattle could be loaded into trailers and transported out. Vogt said the USDA's Farm Service Agency was offering help to replace some fencing and water troughs, but to receive a rebuilding loan they wanted her land to be put up for collateral, which she refused to do.

Militant/José Aravena

Farmer Patty Vogt in Nairn, Louisiana, November 29. Along with her brother, she farmed 30 acres of citrus and raised 300 cows. All but 54 head of cattle were lost when Katrina hit.

"I'm in the worst fix that I've ever been in all my life," said Arthur Becnel, 81, a fifth-generation farmer who produces citrus, Japanese persimmons, pecans, and ornamentals on seven acres. He figures he's lost between $20,000 and $25,000 in crop damage. This includes 70 percent of his citrus and persimmon crop that was ready to harvest.

Becnel said he hasn't had any income since Katrina except for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) standard payments of $2,000 and $2,350.

He has yet to see any insurance money to cover repairs to his storm-damaged greenhouse and barn, and has been turned down for assistance from his homeowners insurance company and FEMA. Needing to get back into production, he paid to repair the greenhouse out of his own pocket.

M.J. Barrois, another part-time citrus farmer, told the *Militant* that the cost of grafted trees for the fruit field are currently $14, up from $10 growers paid before the storms. Some bigger nurseries are taking advantage of the situation.

Barrois said the farmers had a local cooperative at one time to get a better price on the products they needed but it failed because "the people in charge weren't farmers."

Washington's bipartisan policy on Iraq war

Continued from front page

bipartisan agreement on the course to follow in Iraq.

The Pentagon order states that following a U.S.-led war, "stability operations" in an invaded country will be given the same priority as "combat operations."

U.S. military forces will be used to "support indigenous persons or groups—political, religious, educational, and media—promoting freedom, the rule of law, and an entrepreneurial economy," the Pentagon document states. Functions of the military will be extended to include rebuilding of jails, courts, police forces, and "the private sector." The purpose is to use the military to "establish or maintain order in States and region," that is, to stabilize pro-U.S. regimes such as the current one in Iraq.

On November 30 Bush addressed the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, to defend Washington's "strategy for victory in Iraq." It received favorable coverage in liberal dailies such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post.*

In a December 1 article titled "For Once, President and His Generals See the Same War," the *Times* lauded Bush for "a more realistic appraisal" of the challenges involved in winning "complete victory" in Iraq.

In his speech Bush acknowledged widespread opposition among Sunni Muslims to the U.S. occupation and initial problems in rebuilding Iraqi security forces. He said that among the Iraqis who oppose the U.S. military presence, those he called "rejectionists are by far the largest group. These are ordinary Iraqis, mostly Sunni Arabs, who miss the privileged status they had under the regime of Saddam Hussein."

Wealthy Sunnis were the backbone of support for Hussein's Baath party regime and have financed and organized various groups that have carried out bombings and other attacks against U.S. and Iraqi government troops and civilians—mostly in Shiite neighborhoods.

Bush noted progress in drawing prominent Sunni forces into the government, pointing to the substantial turnout of Sunnis in the constitutional elections in October after they largely boycotted the national assembly elections in January.

"The training of the Iraqi security forces is an enormous task, and it always hasn't gone smoothly. We all remember the reports of some Iraqi security forces running from a fight more than a year ago," the U.S. president acknowledged. Now, he said, "all Iraqi army recruits receive about the same length of basic training as new recruits in the U.S. Army," and Iraqi police recruits have spent more time in the field with hands-on training.

Bush said some 120 Iraqi army and police battalions are fighting in Iraq—80 alongside U.S.-led troops and 40 taking the lead in combat. He pointed to the successful operations in September to drive Baathist-led forces from Tal Afar along the Syrian border.

More than a dozen bases have been handed over to the Iraqi military, Bush said, and Iraqi troops are now responsible for security in 90 square miles of Baghdad province. A similar process has developed in much of Iraq, with operations by antigovernment forces limited to the largely Sunni-populated Anbrar province, areas around Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, and the so-called Triangle of Death just south of Baghdad.

The day after Bush's speech, Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, explained that victory in the "war on terrorism" would not have a dramatic end as in World War II. Pace told his audience at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C., that there would be no signing ceremony aboard a battleship or V-Day celebrations, reported the *American Forces Press Service*, a Pentagon publication.

Pace said Washington was making solid progress in its objectives in Iraq. He added, "This is an 'over time' victory, not a pinpoint victory," and would have to be safeguarded once achieved.

In an editorial welcoming Bush's speech the *Washington Post* noted, "Though you wouldn't know it from the partisan rhetoric, there is substantial agreement in Washington on the strategy outlined yesterday by President Bush."

Despite support by House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi for the call by Rep. John Murtha for a withdraw al of U.S. troops from Iraq within six months, the *Post* reported, "many Democrats in Congress agree with the principal elements of Mr. Bush's 'strategy for victory.'" The reason, the editors said, was "a simple absence of choices."

After Bush's speech, Democratic congressman Steny Hoyer of Maryland released a statement contradicting Pelosi, arguing that a "precipitous withdrawal" could lead to "disaster." And in a November 29 letter to constituents, New York senator Hillary Clinton rejected an immediate withdrawal. "We must set reasonable goals to finish what we started and successfully turn over Iraqi security to Iraqis," Clinton stated.

Utah miners set December 17 picket line

Continued from front page

publicize its support for raising the minimum wage in the state and for the Co-Op miners' struggle.

The union representation election was held following a 10-month strike at the Co-Op mine between the fall of 2003 and the following summer. Some 75 workers were fired on Sept. 23, 2003, for union organizing, say the miners. They turned the lockout into a strike, setting up picket lines and winning widespread labor solidarity. In June 2004 the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) found the workers had been fired illegally and brokered a settlement with C.W. Mining, which runs the mine, that forced the company to reinstate the fired miners.

On Dec. 9, 2004, a week before the union vote, the company fired 30 miners for allegedly not having proper work documents. Dismissed workers pointed out these were the same documents they provided when they were hired years earlier, which only became an issue just before the union representation vote. The election was held and the bosses challenged the miners' votes. The NLRB sealed the ballot box and still has not counted the votes or ruled on the firings.

"It's time the NLRB tell us the results of the votes," Contreras said.

After the December 17 picket line, hot drinks and snacks will be served at the UMWA hall in Price. Co-Op miners said they are getting word out about the picket line to other miners who work in the many underground coal mines in the Price area.

More than half of the Co-Op miners are working in these mines. Only two of the mines are organized by the UMWA so far. The rest are nonunion.

Another activity around Human Rights Day that coal miners are building is taking place December 9 in St. Louis. The St. Louis Central Labor Council, UMWA, American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and Jobs with Justice are organizing a march and rally at Peabody Energy's headquarters there and the office of Missouri's governor. "Here in St Louis, we're telling Peabody Energy and Governor Matt Blunt to respect workers' choice to form unions and bargain collectively—free of intimidation, fear and reprisal," says the flyer advertising the event. Co-Op miners said they are sending a delegation to join the march.

St. Louis is near the coalfields of southern Illinois. Peabody closed its last unionized facility in Illinois, the Marissa mine, on Oct. 23, 1999. At the same time, Peabody acquired 82 percent control in the Black Beauty Coal Company, which owns many nonunion mines in Illinois and Indiana. One of world's largest coal companies, Peabody reported a 141 percent increase in profits in the third quarter of 2005.

— ON THE PICKET LINE —

Auto workers in Indiana picket Delphi plant to protest wage cuts

KOKOMO, Indiana—Carrying signs saying, "Delphi cooks the books. Workers get BURNED!" and "[Delphi CEO Robert] Miller: Morally Bankrupt," more than 100 members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 292 set up an informational picket in front of the Delphi plant here to protest the auto supplier's bankruptcy plan. If approved, top executives would be paid huge bonuses while hourly workers receive drastic wage cuts. Delphi, the nation's largest auto parts producer, is seeking bankruptcy court approval for hourly wage cuts from $27 to between $10 and $12.50. Top execs would receive stock options and cash bonuses worth about $500 million.

Delphi had requested a bankruptcy judge void the union contracts December 16, but this decision is now being delayed until January 20.

—Jerry Ulman

600 rally in Detroit to back Northwest Airlines strikers

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Hundreds of striking mechanics and cleaners organized by the Airline Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) and their supporters rallied December 4 at the Crystal Gardens Convention Center in Detroit. The labor action protested the drive by Northwest Airlines to push all the unions off its property.

"An injury to one is an injury to all," said Ron Gettlefinger, president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), the *Detroit Free Press* reported. "We're not just fighting for union members, but for all workers."

The UAW has contributed $880,000 to the AMFA strike effort. Auto workers and members of the International Association of Machinists, Teamsters, and other unionists attended.

"We need unity with the other unions—now," Bob Rose, president of AMFA Local 5 in Detroit, said in an interview. "Union labor is being devastated. If we don't put aside our differences and band together, we'll die apart."

—Nelson González

New York: teaching assistants rally for contract

Militant/Brian Williams

NEW YORK—Some 500 students and workers rallied in front of the New York University library December 2 to demand the university administration negotiate a new union contract with the teaching assistants, members of the Graduate Student Organizing Committee of United Auto Workers Local 2110. The graduate student employees have been on strike since November 9. NYU is refusing to bargain with the union. "This is great, all locals should come together," commented Pete Denicolo, one of about 30 Transport Workers Union Local 100 members attending the rally in solidarity. Their contract with the city expires December 15.

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

January hearing set for Utah mine boss suit

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY—Federal judge Dee Benson has scheduled a hearing on the Co-Op mine owners' harassment lawsuit for January 25. The judge will consider motions filed by the *Militant*, the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News* (Utah's two largest dailies), the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 16 individual Co-Op miners, and Utah Jobs With Justice to dismiss the case.

The bosses' lawsuit grows out of the two-year long struggle for a union at the Co-Op mine near the town of Huntington. C.W. Mining, owner of the Co-Op mine, and its allied International Association of United Workers Union are using defamation and other charges to try to tie up the miners and their supporters in court and divert them from the fight for UMWA representation.

Supporters of the Militant Fighting Fund are helping to build the defense campaign for the *Militant* and publicize the fight of all the defendants against this retributive lawsuit. They plan to participate in AFL-CIO Human Rights Day events December 10 across the country and win support for this important labor defense case.

Recently, Maritime Union of New Zealand Local 13 contributed another $500 to the Fighting Fund and several of the principal officers of the union signed on as endorsers.

Venezuela gov't offers discounted heating oil to working people in Boston and South Bronx

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

NEW YORK—The government of Venezuela is offering discounted heating oil this winter to working-class neighborhoods in Massachusetts and the South Bronx in New York City. Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez made the offer in a speech here September 17 while in the United States for a session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The offer comes as many working people face high fuel prices and heating bills for the winter months. Oil monopolies such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, British Petroleum, and Shell have raked in huge profits as gasoline and diesel fuel prices have skyrocketed.

On November 22, the Venezuelan government signed an agreement with two Massachusetts-based nonprofit organizations—Citizens Energy Corporation and Mass Energy Consumer Alliance—to offer 12 million gallons of heating oil at 40 percent below the market price to 45,000 families that receive federal fuel assistance. The agreement will allow residents with low incomes, as well as shelters, hospitals, and day-care centers, to purchase up to 200 gallons of oil at the discounted price. The oil will be distributed at a Citgo terminal in East Braintree, Massachusetts. Citgo is the U.S. subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil company PDVSA.

The November 25 *Boston Globe* said the fuel would go to families that have used up their $550 annual federal fuel subsidy.

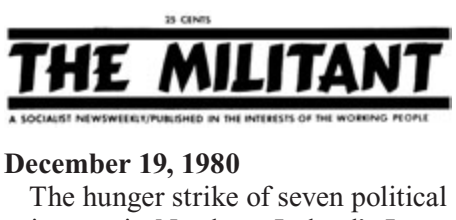
Some 8 million gallons of discounted heating oil will be sent to the South Bronx. Democratic congressman José Serrano helped broker the deal with Chávez during the latter's trip here in August.

Serrano told the press that there are challenges in channeling the discounted fuel to low-income residents here, since most of them rent apartments from private landlords, unlike Massachusetts where many are homeowners. The oil is being distributed to properties housing 8,000 residents in the Bronx. "Part of the savings will go directly to tenants in rent credits, with the rest funding tenant-service programs and energy efficient programs," the *Daily News* reported December 6.

The U.S. Department of Energy reports that heating oil prices went up to $2.06 a gallon this year from $1.54 a gallon in 2004, and are expected to rise to $2.30 a gallon next year. The cost of natural gas heat has risen by 50 percent since last year.

PDVSA supplies 12–15 percent of U.S. oil imports per year. After Hurricane Katrina, the Venezuelan government offered to send 2.5 million barrels of oil, electrical generators, and water treatment plant equipment to the United States, which Washington refused.

— 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —


25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

December 19, 1980

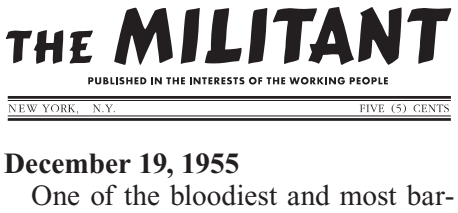
The hunger strike of seven political prisoners in Northern Ireland's Long Kesh concentration camp that began October 27 has touched off a massive solidarity movement throughout Ireland.

In Dublin on November 22, more than 20,000 persons marched in support of the prisoners and in protest against the treatment that forced them to begin to starve themselves to death rather than endure it any longer.

On December 6 some 60,000 people marched on the British embassy in Dublin chanting "Brits out" and "Don't let the hunger strikers die."

These demonstrations are the largest protests against British repression in Northern Ireland held in Dublin since the mass upsurge that followed the slaughter of thirteen Irish civil-rights demonstrators by British paratroopers in Derry on January 30, 1972.

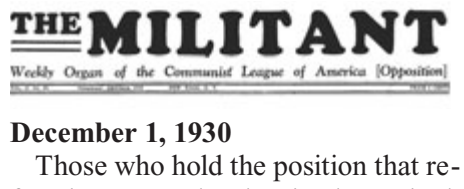
On November 16, ten thousand persons marched in support of the hunger strikers in Coalisland, a small town in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.


THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

December 19, 1955

One of the bloodiest and most barbaric massacres in history is taking place in Kenya—and, contrary to the picture painted by the U.S. press, the savagery is being committed by the "civilized" British imperialists and not by the Kikuyu people, who, rather, are the victims.

The whole campaign was aimed at smashing Kikuyu people, the largest and most advanced tribe in Kenya. Even the name Mau Mau, which the Kikuyu people had never heard of, was invented by the white newspapers of Kenya who also started the fake cry that there was a plot to kill all whites. The political organization of the Kikuyu, the Kenya Africa Union, was outlawed and its leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, jailed. Then a campaign of extermination was begun by the settlers. Villages were burned; men, women and children murdered; the remainder fled to the forests, formed guerrilla bands and began to fight back. Then, of course, the settlers could point to "proof" of the existence of the Mau Mau.


THE MILITANT
Weekly Organ of the Communist League of America [Opposition]

December 1, 1930

Those who hold the position that reformism must develop in the United States are wrong. Trotsky pointed out that America does not have to pass through a period of reformism but this does not mean America will not. When conditions cause a Leftward movement in America today both reform and revolution gain but the ratio depends to a large extent upon the tactics and strategy of the Communists.

Developing capitalism in the past could offer reforms through pressure of the workers and the reformist parties but in this period even American capitalism and its reformist parties have little of material value to offer the workers.

We cannot skip necessary evolutionary steps toward revolution but we can, as Marxists, shorten their duration and even alter their quality. Since the objective conditions favor us, the battle between reform and revolution now primarily rest upon a Marxian party of dialectical revolutionists, not only to explain correctly the conditions but to present the program.

‘Our history is still being written’

The story of three Chinese-Cuban generals in the Cuban Revolution

Below is the introduction to *Our History Is Still Being Written*, a forthcoming book-length interview with three generals in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces who are of Chinese-Cuban origin: Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. The book will be released simultaneously in English and Spanish by Pathfinder Press in January.

Mary-Alice Waters, the author of the introduction, conducted and edited the interviews. She has edited more than

Bohemia

Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba

Above: combatants in 19th century Cuban independence war.
Left: contingent of the Chinese New Democracy Alliance, a Chinese-Cuban organization, in a July 10, 1960, march in support of the Cuban Revolution.

INTRODUCTION

a dozen books of interviews, writings, and speeches of leaders of the Cuban Revolution. In early February Waters, who is president of Pathfinder Press, will join the three generals to present the book at the 15th Havana International Book Fair. Other meetings to mark its release are planned in Havana’s Chinatown and elsewhere.

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❖

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Our History Is Still Being Written adds one more chapter to the chronicle of the Cuban Revolution as told by those who were—and more than fifty years later remain—on the front lines of that epic battle.

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, three young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry, became combatants in the clandestine struggle and 1956–58 revolutionary war that brought down the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista and opened the door to the socialist revolution in the Americas. Each, in the course of a lifetime of revolutionary action, became a general in the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. Through their stories the economic, social, and political forces that gave birth to the Cuban nation and still shape our epoch unfold.

We see how millions of ordinary human beings like them—the “men and women from nowhere” who the rulers cannot even see—simply refused to accept a future without dignity or hope, refused to settle for less than they dreamed of. They marched onto the stage of history and changed its course, becoming different human beings themselves in the process.

The suggestion for this book originally came from Harry Villegas, himself a brigadier general of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces as well as a Hero of the Cuban Revolution. Villegas is today executive vice president of the National Directorate of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. He is known throughout the world as Pombo, the nom de guerre given him in 1965 by Cuban-Argentine revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara when together they fought at the side of the anti-imperialist forces in the Congo, and over the next two years in Bolivia as well.

In February 2002 Pathfinder editors had just completed work on *From the Escambray to the Congo: In the Whirlwind of the Cuban Revolution* by Víctor Dreke. The book had been well received at the Havana International Book Fair and in spirited meetings across the former province of Las Villas in central Cuba, organized in collaboration with the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. We were already far along in preparing two more titles related to the Cuban Revolution and its place in the world: *October 1962: The ‘Missile’ Crisis as Seen from Cuba* by Tomás Diez; and *Marianas in Combat*, the story of Cuba’s highest-ranking female officer, Brigadier General Teté Puebla, and the Mariana Grajales Women’s Platoon in Cuba’s revolutionary war.

Planning ahead, as a competent officer does, Villegas invited us one morning to the national headquarters of the Combatants Association and introduced us to Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong. *Our History Is Still Being Written* is the product of the work that began that day.

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The three young Chinese-Cubans, of similar age, grew up in different parts of Cuba, under different class and social conditions. With each following his own path, all three came to the same revolutionary course of action. They threw themselves into the great proletarian battle that defined their generation—the struggle to overthrow the Batista tyranny and defend Cuba’s sovereignty and independence against the onslaught of the imperialist empire to the north.

The significance and historical weight of Chinese immigration to Cuba starting in the mid-nineteenth century emerges from their accounts. In proportion to population, this immigration to Cuba was greater than anywhere else in the Americas, the United States included. In fact, thousands of Chinese laborers brought to build railroads in the U.S. West later emigrated to Cuba in hopes of finding better conditions of life and work.

The lucrative trafficking in tens upon tens of thousands of Chinese peasants—their impressment, their death-ship transport to Cuba, their indentured labor on sugar plantations supplementing the dwindling supply of African slaves, and above all their resistance, struggles, and unblemished record of combat in Cuba’s 1868–98 independence wars against Spain—all that is sketched here in broad outlines. It is a story largely unknown outside Cuba.

What is presented, however, is not history alone. This is one of the indispensable strands of revolutionary Cuba today—from the pre-1959 racist oppression of Chinese as well as Blacks, to the measures taken by the popular revolutionary government headed by Fidel Castro to end this discrimination and combat its legacy, to the integration of Cubans of Chinese origin into every level of social and political life today. As Sío Wong puts it so forcefully, the greatest measure taken against discrimination “was the revolution itself.”

New from Pathfinder
Available in January

Our History
is still being written

THE STORY OF THREE
CHINESE-CUBAN GENERALS IN
THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

ARMANDO CHOY
GUSTAVO CHUI
MOISÉS SÍO WONG

A chapter in the chronicle of the Cuban Revolution, as told by those on the front lines of that ongoing epic.

Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong—three young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry—threw themselves into the great proletarian battle that defined their generation. They became combatants in the clandestine struggle and 1956–58 revolutionary war that brought down a U.S.-backed dictatorship and opened the door to the socialist revolution in the Americas. Each became a general in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces.

Here they talk about the historic place of Chinese immigration to Cuba, as well as more than five decades of revolutionary action and internationalism, from Cuba to Angola, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Through their stories the social and political forces that gave birth to the Cuban nation and still shape our epoch unfold. We see how millions of ordinary men and women like them changed the course of history, becoming different human beings in the process. $20

Special offer: $15 for Pathfinder Readers Club members (through March 31)

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Left: Chinese-Cuban street vendor in Havana in the 1950s.
Below: reception in 1940s organized by Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Havana.
Left: Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba

Left to right: courtesy of Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong

Left, Armando Choy (front left) helps lead student protest against Batista dictatorship in Santa Clara, May 20, 1957. Choy and others were arrested that day. Center, Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui (front) reviews Cuban tank brigade in Luanda, Angola, 1987. Right, Moisés Sío Wong in Havana as member of Rebel Army Column 8 just after January 1959 revolutionary victory.

"The Chinese community here in Cuba is different from Peru, Brazil, Argentina, or Canada," he emphasizes. "And that difference is the triumph of a socialist revolution."

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The revolutionary overthrow of the Batista dictatorship was not the end of a story. It was the beginning. The working people of Cuba began building a new society that posed an intolerable "affront" to the prerogatives of capital. For nearly half a century they have held at bay the strongest imperialist power that will ever stalk the globe. In doing so the Cuban toilers and their government have become a beacon, and an ally, to those the world over seeking to learn how to fight to transform their lives—and how to fight to *win*.

Among the many responsibilities Choy, Chui, and Sío Wong have each shouldered over the years within the Revolutionary Armed Forces as well as in government assignments and in the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba, participation in Cuba's internationalist missions abroad stands out.

"Because our system is socialist in character and commitment," Choy explains, revolutionaries in Cuba have always sought to act "in the interests of the majority of humanity inhabiting planet earth—not on behalf of narrow individual interests, or even simply Cuba's national interests."

Each served in Angola at various times between 1975 and 1988, as Cuba responded to the request of the Angolan government, just gaining its independence from Portugal, for aid to defeat an imperialist-backed invasion by the armed forces of South Africa's apartheid regime.

Chui helped establish Cuba's internationalist military aid missions in Nicaragua, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Choy served as ambassador to Cape Verde from 1986 to 1992. Sío Wong, president of the Cuba-China Friendship Association, has helped Venezuela's toilers in their efforts to establish and extend small-scale urban agriculture.

The full story of Cuba's sixteen-year internationalist mission to Angola is still to be told. Even in Cuba, no comprehensive account is yet available. But the first-hand experiences and assessments offered here by each of these three generals provide insights into that important period in the history of southern Africa not readily available outside Cuba. Their accounts are reinforced by excerpts from speeches by Cuban president Fidel Castro in December 1988, and by Nelson Mandela and Castro in Matanzas, Cuba, in July 1991, reproduced in the appendix. The significance for Africa and the world of the March 1988 victory of the Cuban-Angolan forces over the South African apartheid military in the battle of Cuito Cuanavale is powerfully presented.

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Our History Is Still Being Written—the title comes from Chui—captures the revolutionary perspective and ongoing intensity of work of the book's three protagonists. In the final section, "The Special Period and Beyond," each of them is looking to the future.

Today Choy heads the massive, multifaceted, multiyear project he describes here to clean up Havana Bay, and to transform the infrastructure of the port of Havana through which flows some 70 percent of Cuba's imports and 90 percent of its exports, sugar and nickel excluded. It is a task irreplaceable to Cuba's economic and social development.

Sío Wong continues to hold the responsibility he assumed almost twenty years ago as president of the National Institute of State Reserves. It is an assignment decisive not only to the current military defense of the revolution, but also to the Cuban government's ability to respond—in marked contrast, on every level, to the capitalist government of the United States—to the needs of the population in times of natural disaster such as Hurricanes Dennis and Wilma, which struck the island this year.

Chui has since 1990 shouldered national responsibilities for the founding and leadership of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. That organization today comprises more than 300,000 Cubans with decades of experience as the backbone of the revolution—from cadres of the Rebel Army and clandestine struggle against Batista's tyranny, to young doctors and teachers completing internationalist missions around the world today, to the five Heroes of the Cuban Revolution framed up on charges of conspiracy to commit espionage and murder, now serving draconian sentences in the federal prisons of the United States. It is responsible for a political education program that reaches into every school and neighborhood in the country.

As each of the three generals makes clear, the future will be decided not *for* the working people of Cuba, but *by* them.

❖

Our History Is Still Being Written, published simultaneously in English and Spanish, came together over a period of almost four years. It is the product of several rounds of interviews, some collective and some individual, that took place in February 2002 and 2004, and were completed in February and August 2005. In preparing the book for publication, we have, insofar as possible, smoothed over the discrepancies of time and circumstances that were an inevitable result of this long gestation.

When we began, for example, Sío Wong, like Choy and Chui, held reserve status as an officer of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. By the time of our final interview in mid-August 2005, he had been called back to active duty. The enormous effort that falls under the rubric of the cleanup, preservation, and development of Havana Bay advanced considerably in the course of those four years. The damage wreaked by Hurricane Michelle in 2001 was matched or superseded by a half dozen other major storms, from Ivan to Charley to Dennis.

Most important, intensifying conflicts among contending classes on an international scale these last four years have opened a new political situation worldwide. The imperialist political offensive, spearheaded by Washington, is advancing under the banner of the "global war on terrorism" and the "transformation" of the military activity of the U.S. rulers and their allies from the Middle East to the Pacific, from Africa to Europe to the North American "homeland" itself. In response to the course of the bipartisan war party and sharpening assaults by the barons of capital, the resistance of working people, at home and abroad, is being transformed as well.

In our hemisphere, the challenges faced and surmounted by the combative toilers of Venezuela have altered the political equation. In face of inevitable aggression from the empire to the north, the stakes are being substantially raised—for us, and for the fighting vanguards of the people of Cuba, Venezuela, and throughout the Americas.

❖

Arrin Hawkins, Martín Koppel, Luis Madrid, and Michael Taber each participated with me in one or more of the interviews that gave us this book. Michael Taber supervised the translation into English and prepared the glossary, annotation, and index. Luis Madrid was responsible for the manuscript in Spanish.

Production of these two books—from transcription to initial translation, from composition, proofreading, and preparation of the digital files for printing, to distribution—has been the work of more than 200 volunteers around the world who make their time and skills available through the Pathfinder Printing Project.

A special note of thanks is owed to the Biblioteca Nacional "José Martí" in Havana, including its director Eliades Acosta, assistant director Teresita Morales, and senior librarian Lisia Prieto, who is responsible for the archives that encompass the library's collection of materials related to Chinese immigration in Cuba. Aid from the library's staff was indispensable in locating and reproducing a number of the graphics that bring these pages to life.

Other historical photos and graphics were located with the help of Delfín Xiqués of *Granma*, Manuel Martínez of *Bohemia*, Milton Chee of San Francisco, California, and through the individual efforts of Generals Choy, Chui, and Sío Wong.

Iraida Aguirrechu, current affairs editor at Editora Política, the publishing house of the Communist Party of Cuba, participated at each stage in all the interviews. Without her determination, diligence, concern for accuracy, and attention to detail, this book would not have seen the light of day.

Finally, and above all, our thanks go to Generals Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong for the many hours they each made available for the work necessary to bring this book to fruition.

We are confident it will be received with thanks by those to whom it is dedicated: the new generations of fighting "men and women from nowhere" now emerging around the world, for whom the example of Cuba's socialist revolution shows the way forward.

November 2005

Courtesy of Moisés Sío Wong

In late 1991 an urban agriculture program was launched, turning vacant lots in Cuban cities, towns, and villages into productive vegetable gardens. In photo, Raúl Castro (center, with glasses) and other party leaders at prototype in Havana, 1987. To right, in dress, is Ana Luisa Pérez, agricultural engineer who pioneered the urban gardens. At left edge, Carlos Lage; at left, in plaid shirt, Esteban Lazo; front left, Vilma Espín.

Trotsky: a life in defense of revolutionary Marxism

Below is an excerpt from the introduction to Leon Trotsky's autobiography, My Life*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in December. The introduction by Joseph Hansen, one of Trotsky's secretaries from 1937 to 1940, recounts the tireless effort by a central leader of the Russian Revolution to maintain V.I. Lenin's revolutionary Marxist perspective against the reversal of that course by a rising bureaucratic layer led by Joseph Stalin. Hansen joined the Communist League of America, predecessor of the Socialist Workers Party, in 1934. He was a central leader of the SWP until his death, and often the* Militant*'s editor. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

Leon Trotsky reviews a copy of the *Militant* in his study during exile in Turkey, early 1931. He was murdered by a Stalinist agent in 1940 in Coyoacán, Mexico.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JOSEPH HANSEN

Several times I have heard of plans to make a film of the life of Trotsky or at least of his final years in Mexico. One attempt was made at a television show on the assassination. It was a miserable business, more slanderous than truthful. A Hollywood entrepreneur that I know of even spent time in Mexico studying the locale and gathering material. In three cases, I have been asked to provide information to help lend verisimilitude to productions that were planned. Two of them fell through and the third may suffer the same fate—which, perhaps, is not altogether to be deplored. The producers began with their own preconceived notions as to what constitutes dramatic material and how Trotsky might be bent into these notions. None of them had much interest in portraying Trotsky's real inner drives or his central commitment and goal in life. The audience they had in mind might not accept this as a good evening's entertainment.

To make a truthful film of Trotsky requires taking him as a political figure but not the kind characteristic of the bourgeois world of today. He was of a different kind—committed, like a great artist, to presenting a faithful reflection of his times, or, more accurately, a scientist who has become convinced that the main problem facing mankind is to change the framework of our times, to end the long agonized epoch of warring classes and to replace it with a society built on the foundation of a rationally planned economy. He could also be pictured truthfully as a tribune and fighter preoccupied with constructing the organization required to win socialism on a world scale.

To make a film of Trotsky in which all this is cast aside is like presenting Pierre and Marie Curie without their drive to discover the secret of radioactivity or the drudgery of fractionating huge amounts of pitchblende in order to isolate the mysterious substances, polonium and radium; or a "drama" of Louis Pasteur without his passionate interest in bacteriology and the painstaking laboratory work he engaged in against the advice of well-meaning friends who sought to persuade him not to waste his valuable time on chimerical and insoluble problems....

Trotsky, who was well acquainted with Freud's work, understood himself very well. In many places he has made perfectly clear how thoroughly he was guided by fully conscious aims; and he has specified what they were.

In the foreword to *My Life* he tells us that "except for the years of the civil war," the "main content of my life…has been party and literary activity." Almost "a third of a century of my conscious life was entirely filled with revolutionary struggle. And if I had to live it over again, I would unhesitatingly take the same path."

For the eleven years remaining to him after he wrote *My Life,* Trotsky continued to do what he had done in the previous three decades. His order of priorities was not the same as that of so many intellectuals who came to admire his genius. They put in first place his best known books, *Literature and Revolution, The History of the Russian Revolution, The Revolution Betrayed, Stalin—An Appraisal of the Man and His Influence.* They rated as next in the list the mass of articles, pamphlets, booklets—on German fascism, on the Spanish revolution, on the deepening crisis in France, on the whole turbulent course of events as the world moved towards its second global war.

Few of them were attracted by the contributions Trotsky made in the internal discussions of the Fourth International. This is understandable, for these writings can be fully appreciated only by cadres with a considerable Marxist background. As for Trotsky's "party" activities, particularly in the final eleven-year period, the intellectuals at best have simply not been interested.

Trotsky himself, however, took a different attitude. In the journal which he kept for a time in France and Norway, he jotted the following very revealing thoughts in his March 25, 1933, entry: "For a long time now I have not been able to satisfy my need to exchange ideas and discuss problems with someone else. I am reduced to carrying on a dialogue with the newspapers, or rather through the newspapers with facts and opinions. And still I think that the work in which I am engaged now, despite its extremely insufficient and fragmentary nature, is the most important work of my life—more important than 1917, more important than the period of the Civil War or any other."

December BOOKS OF THE MONTH

PATHFINDER READERS CLUB SPECIALS 25% DISCOUNT

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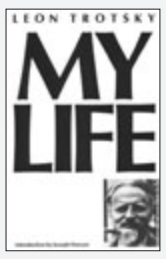
by Leon Trotsky
Autobiographical account by a leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, the Soviet Red Army, and the battle initiated by Lenin against the Stalinist bureaucracy. $33
Special price: $25



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EDITORIAL

Imperialist troops out of Iraq now!

A new Pentagon directive outlining the place of the U.S. military in leading "stability operations," as in Iraq, is another step along Washington's course to transform its military in order to defend more effectively the interests of the wealthy U.S. ruling class around the world. In the next imperialist wars, the U.S. armed forces are to take over the role of rebuilding security forces, jails, courts and "encouraging entrepreneurship" in U.S.-occupied countries.

Washington's goal in Iraq is to consolidate a relatively stable regime that will cooperate with U.S. imperialism in the pursuit of its aims worldwide under the banner of the "war on terrorism." It will use the Pentagon to help get this job done.

In Iraq as in Afghanistan and elsewhere, the U.S. rulers are also seeking to deal further blows to their imperialist rivals over control of markets, territory, and natural resources such as oil.

No longer facing down massive Soviet bloc troops and armored divisions across Europe, Washington has begun implementing a fundamental shift in the strategy, global deployment, and structure and leadership of its armed forces—a military that is more lightly armored and more agile, with special operations forces taking the lead. This "transformation," as the Pentagon calls it, aims to prepare for an increase in military conflicts between states, not for fighting a ghostly enemy that transcends borders. This includes holding states accountable for any "terrorist" group they finance or harbor, or that operates back and forth across their national boundaries. Washington is preparing for battles over the future of Iran and Syria, Pakistan and India, China and Taiwan, Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics, and beyond.

There is no debate among the Democratic and Republican parties over this fundamental course. As the *Washington Post*, a liberal critic of the White House, acknowledged in a December 1 editorial, "there is substantial agreement in Washington on the strategy for Iraq outlined yesterday by President Bush." There is "a simple absence of choices," it said—meaning that Democratic politicians present no alternative to further the interests of the ruling U.S. billionaires.

What marks U.S. capitalist politics today is not debate over strategy but ever-sharper factionalism, demagogy, and degradation of the political discourse. That is the source of all the shouting about "failed intelligence" and "lack of an exit strategy" by Bush's Democratic opponents. This factionalism is bred by a vague but growing awareness among the ruling families of the economic vulnerability of their crisis-ridden system and their inability to find a course that they are confident can overcome that crisis.

The interests of working people do not lie with either of the parties of the ruling rich. Their war against Iraq is the international extension of their war against the wages, social gains, and rights of working people at home. We should support the right of the people of Iraq and other countries in the region to determine their own affairs, free from the predatory intervention of Washington, London, and other powers. All imperialist troops out of Iraq now! Hands off Syria and Iran!

L.A. truckers resist port bosses' attack

Continued from front page

the independent owner-operators."

For drivers the program means longer hours and being forced to work at night. "The problem is the waiting," said Carlos Mazo, a driver from Long Beach. "At one of the terminals there is only one crane operator at night. During the day they usually have five."

After putting in 14 hours, port driver Jose Zepeda stopped to talk to *Militant* reporters outside a fueling station here. "The other night I waited an hour and a half to pick up my load. I was so frustrated I called the dispatch and told him to forget it. The night work sucks." Zepeda has been a port driver for two years.

"Sometimes I have to wait two or three hours," he added. The Offpeak program has made things worse for port drivers. Most work between 60 and 70 hours a week, Zepeda said.

"If I can't find work during the day, I will wind up working 12–16 hours because I have to keep working into the night," Alfonso Gonzalez told the *Los Angeles Times*. These conditions make it more common for drivers to sleep in their trucks and not go home at night.

"We're paid only $55–$60 per load and lucky if we get three loads a day," said Santiago Negrete, a driver from Anaheim. "Diesel prices are killing us, plus we have to pay for repairs, insurance, highway taxes and permits, tires, and other truck maintenance."

Even though diesel prices have fallen recently, they are still higher than the prices that sparked mass protests in 2004 by drivers at the Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland ports. Zepeda said a lot of drivers don't get paid enough to maintain their trucks, many of which are old and in disrepair. Making matters worse, the California Highway Patrol sets up checkpoints in the port, pulling over and harassing drivers. "Two tickets and you lose your license," said Zepeda.

At least 10,000 port drivers haul cargo to transportation centers near the port. The largely nonunion and immigrant workforce is made up of drivers from Mexico and Central American countries. Although attempts to unionize the drivers in the past have failed, sentiment for organizing and collective action is not far below the surface. "We need to organize," Negrete said. "If we don't, nothing will change."

LETTERS

Cuba's internationalism

I just read and thoroughly enjoyed the *Militant* article by Arrin Hawkins "Why Washington fears selfless internationalism of Cuban volunteer doctors" [December 12 *Militant*]. Hawkins points out that in Cuba there is one doctor for every 170 Cubans, and one for every 188 people in the United States. The numerical proximity is a lot closer than the reality. In the United States, according to official government census reports, which are often conservative, nearly 16 percent of the nation's population lacks health insurance. This means at least that many face a serious challenge in *seeing* a doctor regularly, if at all, due to the high cost. A 15-minute doctor's visit = $100 easy (plus prescriptions).

Growing up, there was no culture of doctor visits and checkups for me or many of my friends. The doctor was for emergencies.

There is no charge for doctor visits, check-ups, operations, dental visits, vaccinations, and more in Cuba. This makes it accessible for all. Though health care doesn't cost for individuals there, these things of course are not "free." They are made possible, as Hawkins points out, because in 1959 workers and farmers seized power from the capitalist class and have used the human and natural resources of that country for the advancement and development of society *in* Cuba and around the globe.

Brian Taylor
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Rosa Parks

Why was the American government recently commemorating Rosa Parks? Lenin explained it well in *State and Revolution*: "During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them... and to hallow their *names*... for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its *substance*."

Per Leander
Stockholm, Sweden

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Houston janitors

Continued from front page

of Houston's 7–8,000 office cleaners. The announcement opens the way to winning the first union contract for janitors in Houston. It is the first major union-organizing victory here in 25 years.

The organizing campaign began in April and met with resistance from the contracting companies. In July the janitors held a 10-day strike against ABM Janitorial Services. Currently the average pay for a janitor in Houston is $5.30 per hour, or 15 cents above the minimum wage.

"We struck over the heavy workload and the very low pay," Albino Hernández, who worked for ABM at First City Tower, told the *Militant*. "The company first handed out a paper telling us to have nothing to do with the union, but most of us signed up anyway. A number of us were fired for our support to the union. This is a big victory for all of us. I'm not working there now, but I'm totally with the union."

The strikers received support from union members across the United States. Teamsters and other unionists honored the picket lines of the striking janitors.

The workers soon reached an agreement with five contracting companies—One Source Facility Services, Sanitors Services of Texas, GCA Services Group, ABM Janitorial Services, and Pritchard Industries Southwest—requiring the bosses to recognize the union if a majority of employees signed cards. The certification of the cards has now made union representation official at all except Pritchard.

"Today, I am very proud to say we did it, Houston janitors," Flora Aguilar told the press December 1 in making the official announcement. Aguilar, one of the newly organized janitors, was speaking to dozens of workers who had gathered at Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston that day.

According to an SEIU press release, workers at other cleaning firms will press to use this victory to also win union recognition.

Independent truckers in Houston win strike

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

HOUSTON—"We're all back to work," said David Santos, in a recent telephone interview. "Not only did we get everybody back to work, but we won *$1.23* an hour!"

Santos, an independent truck driver, was describing the results of a week-and-a-half long walkout by a 100 owner-operators from Bridge Terminal Transport (BTT) that began October 24. The drivers demanded better rates as compensation for high fuel costs.

Over the last decade, Santos said, these drivers were getting only 85 cents a mile. The initial demand was $1.20 a mile, and they won slightly more than that, he said, elated.

The BTT bosses had fired three drivers off the bat as an opening salvo and called in the cops to further intimidate the strikers.

The company initially offered a miserly 10 cents a mile increase, which the drivers rejected as an insult. Their determination to stick together, as well as the publicity in the Spanish-language media and solidarity from other drivers, forced the company to back down.

Pathfinder at Miami book fair

Pathfinder booth at November 18–20 Miami Book Fair, which thousands attended. Volunteers sold 134 Pathfinder books and pamphlets, for a total of $1,334, and 35 subscriptions to the *Militant*—double from last year's fair.

Militant/Eric Simpson